

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

STATE ROUTE 75 IMPROVEMENTS AND PROPOSED EASEMENTS TO TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND CITY OF JOHNSON CITY, WASHINGTON AND SULLIVAN COUNTIES, TENNESSEE - FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Proposed Action and Need

Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) proposes to improve 3.86 miles of State Route (SR) 75 from SR 36 to SR 357 (Airport Connector) in Washington and Sullivan Counties. Improvements would result in widening of the existing two-lane to a four-lane, curbed and guttered highway, with a continuous center turn lane. The existing two-lane bridge over the South Fork Holston River (SFHR) (upper Fort Patrick Henry Reservoir) would also need to be replaced. The proposed highway improvement project would cross the western edge of Boone Dam Reservation and cross the SFHR and other streams. Expansion of TDOT's existing easement requires additional land use authorization (permanent easement) affecting approximately 7 acres of TVA land along 0.6 mile of the project corridor. The access roads onto Boone Dam Reservation and Boone tailwater fishing area would be slightly realigned or altered by this proposal.

This deficient segment of roadway does not allow for safe vehicle passing and sight stopping distance. Deficiencies would be corrected and capacity increased; unstable traffic flow would also be improved. Other benefits would include improved access to adjacent business and commercial developments and traffic flow to and from Tri-City Airport.

Additionally, the city of Johnson City, Tennessee (City), currently holds an easement from TVA along SR 75 over a small piece of land within the corridor needed to widen the existing TDOT easement area. The City is therefore requesting a new easement area on nearby TVA land to relocate an existing wastewater (sewer) pump station. A site for the new City easement area has been identified.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is in receipt of a land use application from TDOT for the proposed road widening onto the requested easement area and preliminary plans for SFHR bridge replacement. Approvals for Section 26a permits have not been requested. The City will be submitting a land use application for the new pump in the near future.

Background

The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TDOT completed an environmental assessment in November 1999. Because TVA identified additional issues related to hazardous waste and the historic properties information has changed, the attached supplemental EA was prepared to better understand the impacts of TDOT proposal as well as the City's easement relocation.

Based on independent review of the conclusions about impacts on resources in the FHWA/TDOT EA, TVA incorporates by reference the findings in this EA and FONSI.

Alternatives

The Final FHWA/TDOT EA identified two alternatives, No-Build and Build. Under the No-Build Alternative, no improvements other than routine maintenance would be made to this section of SR 75. The City's sewer pump station easement would remain at its present location and be unaffected by this proposal. Under the Build Alternative, deficiencies would be corrected and other benefits, including providing an economic stimulus, would accrue. Wetland impacts would be mitigated. The historic Wahoo Post Office described in the FHWA/TDOT EA would have been adversely affected by the proposal; however, it has been more recently destroyed by its owner. Implementation of this alternative would require relocation of the City's sewer pump station easement to a new site on TVA property. No impacts are expected.

Public and Intergovernmental Review

In April 1998, an initial coordination package describing the proposed FHWA/TDOT project was sent to various federal, state, and local agencies and officials for review and comment. On November 30, 1999, copies of the draft FHWA/TDOT EA were made available at several locations in the area. A combined corridor and design public hearing was then held in February 2000 in Blountville. The hearing was well attended and participants did not express strong opposition to the project.

Impacts Assessment

Following receipt of the land use application, TVA conducted an independent review and evaluation of the proposed highway improvements and pump station relocation projects. This review determined all impacts to be insignificant. By letter dated April 12, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that its records did not indicate the presence of any federally listed or proposed endangered or threatened species within the impact area of the project. Work and placement of structures within the limits of 100-year floodplain would be minimized and TVA concludes that there is no practicable alternative to construction in the SFHR floodplain.

FHWA, TDOT, SHPO, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation signed an MOA under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on April 15, 1999, to mitigate project effects on the Wahoo Post Office. This structure, once potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, no longer occurs along the project corridor, and therefore, TVA concludes that no historic properties would be affected by its actions.

Mitigation

TDOT will mitigate the loss of 0.1 acre (at a 2:1 ratio) either on site or by debiting 0.2 acre of wetland from available wetland credits at an appropriate wetland mitigation banking site.

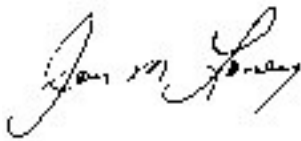
TDOT will implement mitigation measures and sound engineering and construction BMPs to control soil and stream bank erosion, runoff, and resuspension of sediments in SFHR and other streams. This FONSI is contingent upon successful

implementation of BMPs for erosion and sediment control (TVA Standard Conditions 5a-e and 6a-i).

Conclusion and Findings

TVA has determined that no threatened and endangered species would be affected by the entire SR 75 project and unavoidable wetland impacts would be adequately mitigated. TVA has also evaluated the project for compliance with Executive Order 11988 on Floodplain Management and determined that no practicable alternative to widening the highway along the existing highway route is available due to the associated cost with relocating a highway. There would be no effects on endangered or threatened species from the project. TVA has determined that granting the requested land easement expansion and its Section 26a approval actions along the entire route would not result in adverse effect to historic properties.

Based on this EA, we conclude that the granting the proposed easements and Section 26a approvals under the TVA Act would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required.



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Date Signed